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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2006

In Today's Papers

Erdogan, Ahmadinejad to Meet in Baku

All papers report on Friday, Prime Minister Erdogan and Iranian President Ahmadinejad are to come together on the sidelines of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) meeting in Baku to discuss Iran's nuclear program and anti-terror operations against the PKK by the Iranian and Turkish forces. Erdogan is expected to urge Ahmadinejad to follow transparent policies with respect to Iran's nuclear program. Foreign Minister Gul said yesterday diplomatic means should be pushed for a compromise, expressing hope that the meeting will have a fruitful outcome. Gul noted that the same messages Erdogan will give Ahmadinejad will be given to Ali Larijani "in strong terms" during Iran's chief nuclear negotiator's visit to Ankara on Monday.

Erdogan and Karamanlis Stress Improving Ties at Thessalonica Meeting

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan met his Greek counterpart Karamanlis at the Southeast Europe Cooperation Process summit held in the Greek city of Thessalonica yesterday. Karamanlis told the press after the meeting it was "understandable" that the two countries' views on several matters differ. "However," Karamanlis said, "Our ties are much better compared to past years, and there is a will to improve them further." The two leaders said their countries enjoyed a "strategic partnership" in economy and energy cooperation. They also said the Turkish minority in western Thrace and the Greek Orthodox minority in Istanbul constituted a "historical tie of friendship." Karamanlis reiterated Athens' support for Turkey's EU membership drive, and the two prime ministers agreed to work to increase the trade between the countries from USD 2 billion to 5 billion.

Lagendijk Condemns PKK Terror, Urges More Kurdish Rights

All papers: Turkey-EU Joint Parliamentary Commission co-

president Joost Lagendijk told the press in Ankara yesterday that the European Parliament condemned the PKK bombing of a school bus carrying the children of military personnel in Hakkari on Wednesday, stressing that using violence as a political means would lead to a "dead end." Lagendijk called on Kurdish politicians and leaders to come out against the PKK, stressing he hopes to find such figures in Diyarbakir where he plans to go after wrapping up meetings in Ankara. "A lot of Kurds in Turkey understand that their future will be a better one if Turkey becomes a part of the EU. They want more rights and economic development in the region. I'm deeply convinced that if that happens, the large majority of Kurds living here will see the benefits of Turkey's accession; that is what we have been seeing over the last couple of years. There is no European or Kurdish interest in splitting up Turkey and going for a sort of land-locked country that will not bring them any socio-economic development whatsoever," Lagendijk said. On the issue of granting more cultural rights to Kurds, Lagendijk noted: "For instance on Kurdish broadcasts, I think it would be very clever of the Turkish government to allow Kurdish TV broadcasts to flourish instead of allowing only 45 minutes a day. But such things will only happen if there is an end to violence".

EU Warns Turkey to Change Parliamentary Immunity System
Radikal reports the Council of Europe's anti-corruption unit, the Group of European Countries against Corruption (GRECO), have asked Turkey to change its parliamentary and bureaucratic immunity system. A 120-page GRECO report says impartial criteria freed of political calculations must be applied to parliamentary immunity, underlining the fact that the existing immunity system blocks investigation of

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corruption. The report says that none of the lawmakers' immunities were revoked in the 115 investigation motions that have been submitted to the parliament since 2002.

Semdinli Trial Begins

All papers: The first hearing of the Semdinli case against three men, two of them members of Turkish armed forces, accused of bombing a bookstore in Semdinli, opened in a very tense atmosphere. Prosecutor Metin Dikec replaced the dismissed prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya. Zaman says that international organizations and international news agencies like AFP, AP and BBC were following the trial. The judge read only the summary of the indictment with the exclusion of the section accusing the Land Forces commander General Buyukanit. The claimants' lawyers asked for the judge to be taken off the case, stating that he had previously accused them of being PKK members and that there was heavy political pressure on the court. The defendant's lawyers, in return, said that the judge had no connection with the previous public prosecutor; therefore, there was no need for him to withdraw.

Diyarbakir Mayor Baydemir Cancels his Northern Iraq Trip
Zaman, Sabah: After planning to attend the opening of the Kurdish Parliament in Northern Iraq together with his party (DTP) leaders Ahmet Turk and Aysel Tuglu, Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir cancelled his trip in order to assist PM Erdogan in Diyarbakir during AKP congress on Sunday.

"US Faces UN Investigation over CIA Torture Planes"

Aksam, Cumhuriyet and others: The US is going to be officially questioned by the UN for the first time after the announcement of its fight against terrorism. The UN Counter Torture Committee will meet with US officials in Geneva today to question them about secret CIA prisons, CIA flights and about torture allegations in these prisons.

Commentary on the US-Turkey "Strategic Vision" Document
The US-Turkey "Strategic Vision" document, announced during Secretary Rice's visit to Ankara last week continues to

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generate commentary. Erol Manisali, writing in left-leaning Cumhuriyet, calls the document "another propaganda tool," explaining that "Turkey and the US currently do not share a mutual strategic vision; instead there is a strategic opposition to each other's views. For instance, regarding Iraq, the American vision is to establish a pro-American Kurdistan in northern Iraq. Steps are underway in this regard and the US shares this strategic goal with Israel. The US also wants to make Turkey an active part of its regional operations. According to Washington, Turkey must actively support and provide bases to any American operation in this region. This is the US understanding of the meaning of a strategic vision."

Taking the opposite view, Washington-based Hasan Mesut Hazar writes in the conservative daily Turkiye: "Some still argue that the strategic partnership is over and Washington has written off Turkey's ruling party. They tend to ignore the fact that the US continues to pursue a strategic relationship with many countries, including India, Israel, UK, Greece, Poland and Pakistan. A strategic relationship does not require a mutual consensus on every issue. A strategic relationship can be defined via mutual interests and cooperation. Unlike US-Israel relations, Washington's relationship with Ankara is strategic but not vital. And it does not have to be, because Turkey and the US are in NATO. Rice's visit to Ankara was a very successful event and the upcoming strategic vision document will help to express to the public the nature and content of bilateral ties between the two countries."

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TV Highlights
NTV (8 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Kurdish party DTP's provincial chief in the Mediterranean port city of Mersin, Ali Bozan, has been arrested for involvement in separatist activities.
- EU Parliament's Turkey rapporteur Camiel Eurlings has urged Ankara to carry on with the process of reforms, asking for the reopening of Halki Seminary.
- A Turkish high court overturned a court verdict which ruled that compensation be paid by retired General Osman Ozbek for criticizing Prime Ministry Under Secretary Omer Dincer's views by saying they are not compatible with the Turkish Constitution.

International News

- Ehud Olmert has presented his new cabinet to Knesset. "The borders of Israel that will be formed in the coming years will be significantly different from the territories under Israel's control today," Olmert said.
- Amnesty International said torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment of detainees by US forces are widespread and, in many cases, sanctioned by top government officials.
- Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen said neither Turkey nor the EU were ready for Turkey's EU accession.
- President Bush and the Germany Chancellor Merkel said they're united in efforts to prevent Iran from building a nuclear bomb.

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